ENDRE ADY

Selected Poems

MOSAIC PUBLICATIONS
NEW DELHI
INDIA

First Edition November 1977

Published by :-
Mosaic Publications
p. o. box nr. 3529
new delhi-110024
India

Price :- Rs.15.00
for other countries
U.S. $ 5 00

Printed at :
Mosaic Publications Press
New Delhi

ENDRE ADY

1877—1919

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THE BACKGROUND

Endre Ady died fifty years ago on January 12, 1919, in the turbulent days of the collapse of old Hungary and the transient victory of Count Mihaly Karolyi's republican revolution. He was one of the leaders in the social and spiritual transformation of Hungary which had begun to take shape just before the turn of the century. The nation mourned him to a man, and a huge crowd followed him on his last journey The heated debates which had raged around his personality, his journalism and his poetry seemed to subside; Hungary in the throes of long overdue reforms looked on the poet as the spokesman embodying in visionary words her problems of existence.

The political and public commitment of major Hungarian poets has always been more marked than that of the poets of the West And this is particularly true of Endre Ady. Without some knowledge, consequently, of the Hungarian background important aspects of his poetry remain inaccessible. He came of that gentry class which regarded itself as the embodiment of thousand-year-long Hungarian history · his ancestors were impoverished noblemen. Up to the sixteenth century Hungary had been a major power in Eastern Europe With her overthrow as an independent kingdom, however, she had become the battlefield or the possession of foreign powers, and in succeeding centuries she only attracted world attention through her struggles for independence. In 1867 the Hapsburg Empire had been transformed into the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. In Hungary, becoming independent as a sister-state and undergoing rapid industrialization, power, based on common interest, was in the

hands of the alliance between feudalism, appearing to its historical privileges, and capitalism, coming increasingly into its own. A section of the ruling classes had lapsed into a rigid, lifeless conservatism. Other members of these classes had cut themselves free from their traditionally provincial way of life only to lead a rootless life in the big towns and cities. A third group, newcomers of Austrian, Slovak and Jewish origin, were barely assimilated. Though enfranchised, the peasantry had been left to fend for themselves in the subsequent period of free enterprise, and the more adventurous had emigrated to America. The expansion of industry had produced growing masses of workers slowly coming to political consciousness. The first demonstrations of organized workers and the agrarian socialist movement had taken place. National and minority feelings had flared up from time to time. All this had inevitably foreboded revolution.

The forces working for change found their expression in a literature created by exceptionally talented writers. The revolution in letters allied to a new revolutionary outlook in politics brought about new standards of aesthetic values. Ady, the outstanding poet-leader of this revival, appeared as a revolutionary at once in poetic expression, language, attitude and politics.

CONTROVERSIES

Acrimonious controversies over Ady broke out anew shortly after the failure of the revolution and the poet's death. The Hungarian opposing camps inside and outside the borders of the territorially truncated country fought over the dead poet and his living work as opponents had once fought over the body of Patroclus. Those who accused him of obscurity, immorality and treason carried on the battle with great bitterness against those who cherished him as the reviver of poetry and as a true and stainless fighter for social justice.

Ady regarded himself as a typical representative of his people. This knowledge continued to inspire his life-work In a provocative poem announcing his poetic faith *(Gog es Magog fia vagyok en* — "I am the son of God and Magog ") he wrote in a famous final

passage that though his poetry may be damned by the conservative nationalists, "still it is triumphant, still new and still Hungarian.

Coming as it does from a Hungarian poet this much-commented line may strike an almost comical note for the non-Hungarian reader. Why should the obvious be emphasized with such provocative vehemence? And why is what is natural provocative? It must be borne in mind, however, that centuries of foreign domination had alienated native Hungarian culture or replaced it with an alien culture In a Hungary craving for revival, with revolutionary changes ripening, a simultaneous struggle was being waged for social reform and national independence. In this struggle it was only natural that a vigorous voice raised for the right of the Hungarians to their own culture, morality, independent nationhood and politics, in other words, for the freedom to express the true spirit of the nation, should have found a wide public response. Especially if we remember that Ady was one of those who revolted against the superficial veneer of patriotism as passionately as against pervasive foreign influences They looked for the sources of the authentic Hungarian personality in living memories of bygone centuries, and still more in the ancient culture submerged and fixed *deep in the life of* the common people.

THE DANUBE REGION

They included the culture of the neighbouring Danube peoples in this traditional folk culture of the peoples who had so often been made to fight against one another in the course of their history. Hence the dialectic of Ady's view of Eastern Europe. On the one hand "The Danube region attracts thunderbolts; a pillory of shame for half-men, small half-nations." On the other : "Why in the end is not one strong will born of a thousand benumbed desires? Since Hungarian, Rumanian, Slav sorrow remains for ever the same sorrow" The "Hungarian Jacobins," as Ady called his ideological comrades-in-arm, meant the oppressed classes which were to be liberated in the Danube basin to play a major role in the fight for national independence

Ady was no active revolutionary. In his writing the heritage of national liberation movements was fused with thoughts and experiences arising out of contemporary social struggles. He wrote and sang not only of the great revolts and uprisings of the past, not only of the misery and rebelling anger of the peasantry; he was also the first Hungarian poet to write about the proletariat in his poetry. Nonetheless he did not identify himself with any of the organized revolutionary movements : he considered himself an exceptional individual, a person apart. His entire poetry was informed with the worship and agony of reason. His view of life and ethics were new in a revolutionary way; and the expression of this unrestrained individualism, this consciousness of his genius was likewise revolutionary. He called himself "a faun-like rustic Apollo" and "the scion of king Midas," "tomorrow's hero," "death's kinsman," "a bound soul" and a "prince of rapture," "the martyr of the holy Orient" and "the wanderer of the virgin peaks," "the poet of the Hortobagy *puszta*" and "the lost rider," "the striker of flame and "the Hungarian Messiah"—and how many other things beside! He never considered poetry a craft, but always as a form of expression : "I am the master, poetry nothing but a bedizened servant." He touched every painful and disquieting sore in contemporary Hungarian life; it was this quality of his poetry that has made it an inspiration for the Hungarian reform movements, a Bible for the Hungarians at home and the Hungarians scattered through the world.

"THE HUNGARIAN HELL"

He started his career with the treadmill of provincial papers, wild revels and carousings, aimless and meaningless love affairs A longer trip to Paris and though Italy made him conscious of himself his experiences there included a liberating ill-fated love, political radicalism, a broadening outlook through European horizons and an acquaintance with modern poetic expression. Just as Ady changed the name of his love from the middle-class Adel to the mythological Leda, making a symbol of it, so he turned the traditional Hungarian romantic motives of the *puszta*, the horse, the watering well, the *fokos* (a kind of long-helved axe or spontoon) and the county hall into symbols evocative of "the Hungarian hell," "including

the objects world capitalism had brought in its train. He soon made his name as a journalist. But his real pioneering work was done in poetry. The birth of modern Hungarian poetry is justly reckoned from the dates of publication of his first three volumes *Uj versek* (New Poems, 1906), *Ver es arany* (Blood and Gold, 1907) and *Az Illes szekeren* (Elijah's Chariot, 1908). All the problems of modern existence are expressed in his poetry, with the help of a system of symbols in which elements of the most ancient and most modern mythologies, superstitions, faiths and symbolisms are combined. His is a poetic world at once imaginative and provocative, unapprehensible and fascinating, prolific, yet crystalline in structure. His language both flows freely and is as concise and mysterious as runes; now trivial to the point of banality, now majestic and arcane as mystical liturgies, The language of Ady's poetry is the idiom of modern poetry, complex, unhackneyed, allusive and oblique.

INCOMPREHENSIBLITY ?

From this the reader may begin to see why this kind of poetry is so hard of access, and why in the renewed discussion on Ady's work the charge of "incomprehensibility" has been levelled once more, on two different grounds In Hungary his poetry was received with astonished incomprehension or zealous enthusiasm, but in both cases with the kind of perplexity all major innovators have to face. Abroad the specifically Hungarian character of his poetry hampers or prevents understanding, not merely the fact that his poetry is full of references to contemporary topical events in Hungarian life, but also the fact that an integral part of his poetic system of symbols is unknown to the western reader. I emphasize "western" because, as I said earlier, the peoples of the Danube basin find him much more comprehensible, and easier to assimilate and his impact on them has consequently been considerable. To clarify every aspect of his poems would need the same sort of annotation and explanation for the uninformed reader as we need for the *Divine Comedy*

In the last decade of his short life Ady's poetic horizon widened greatly In his later volumes—*Szeretnem ha szeretnenek* (I would

Like to Be Loved, 1910), *A minden titkok versei* Verses of All Secrets, 1910), *A menekulo elet* (Fugitive Life, 1912) *A magunk szerelme* (Self-Love, 1913). *Ki latott engem?* (Who Has Seen Me? 1914)—the themes of the first volumes appear again and again. This is all the clearer since Ady always organized his volumes around cycles of poems, and the same themes re-appear and show their resemblances to one another. Three of these themes, however, were particularly significant and developed in richer and more completely expressive forms.

LOVE AND DEATH

The love themes became more concrete and imbued with even greater agony. He had married, and he seemed to have found repose in "the haven of young arms." But the shadow of increasing gloom and the resigned anticipation of death fell even on these poems of happy consummation.

His philosophical poetry might seem at first glance the disconnected, delirious confessions, ravings, prophecies of a wild barbarian sage. In reality they are the expressions of the metaphysical agonies, the contemporary frustration and search for faith of the whole of European civilization. "Unbelieving, I believe in God"—this might be said for all of them These poems gave occasion for more than one critic to rank him among the great religious poets of the century, although, or because, this religious inspiration is free from all the limitations imposed by churches, and kind of early existentialism plays at least as important a part in it as living Christian traditions. The system of symbols in these poems may therefore be more easily accessible to the Western European reader, since the symbols used are common to all Christianity, and are becoming increasingly well-known in modern literature, especially those found in the Scriptures and in literature, from Nietzsche to Rilke

THE DILEMMAS OF HUNGARIAN DESTINY

The third theme—the dilemmas of the Hungarian destiny—is less accessible, if indeed at all. In this sphere, I repeat, there are

many symbols and allusions which are common to Hungarian and East European history During the First World War Ady, turning against the new Behemoth, total war, warned and wept for Hungary and humanity slipping down on a doomed slope. As he was opposed to the authorities who waged the war he was unable to publish new volumes of poetry for several years. His last collection *A halottak elen* (In the Vanguard of the Dead, 1918) published while he was still alive, contained a selection of the poetic harvest of those four years. This marked the peak of his career. Dying, he forced his people's destiny and his own to face the ultimate metaphysical powers, threw the authority of his genius into the scales against the horror of the war. His anti-war poetry reached its highest peak in these apocalyptic poems, which expressed the suffering of the Hungarian people and mankind drowning together in a whirlpool of barbarism "Poor men kill," he wrote, "do nothing but kill. In their fevered dreams they make peace and are happy. Rising in the morning they rage again, die and are damned, grow down into savage beasts. Gallows go up in Death's fields, fat carrion crows sit atop them gorged with dead flesh, they fly off and back. Only men do not tire of death."—"Now is God's famous son, Man, the shame of all the beasts And the prophets themselves can only gibber. A yet deeper Hell, yet more Nothingness—grant us this, grant us this, you far-famed God of Heaven !"

THE PROBLEM OF TRANSLATION

It is difficult to draw a convincing portrait of Ady for the writers and critics of other nations. This is not merely because his problems, his system of symbols, and his idiom are closely involved with the life and history of the Hungarian people, but also because values of his poetry which extend beyond this strictly limited world—those which are universal—have no parallel. In part, because the storm of time blew over them and fanned the sparks which had only barely begun to glow in his poems into flames elsewhere. Partly, however, because they represent innovations which have only reappeared in isolated examples of the newest poetry. His contemporaries considered him influenced by the French moderns. For a time he too regarded himself as one of the Symbolists, but in fact they

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THE IMPORTANCE AND INFLUECE OF ADY

GYORGY LUKACS

The famous Hungarian philosopher was among the first to recognize Ady's genius in an essay published in 1910. Professor Lukacs wrote this statement on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Ady's death

I suppose it follows from the Hungarian situation that the *true* revolutionary is not a typical Hungarian phenomenon. I cannot analyse this further within the scope of this study, but it is certainly connected with the specific nature of Hungarian development and the fact that in the 1848-49 revolution the gentry filled the role which the lower middle classes and the proletariat filled in France. With the development of capitalism the gentry went steadily downhill and the potential revolutionary elements which were still part of its make up in 1848-49 increasingly declined. Even the objectively-minded progressive movements, the *bourgeois* and labour movements adapted themesives to this peculiar state of Hungarian development. Now under true revolutionary conditions a great man always appears - personified by Petofi[1] *in* 1848 and at the turn of the century by Ady—combining themselves all that should have existed in Hungary, but in fact they had no real group of adherents or followers I believed, and I still believe, that no matter how enthusiastic people were about Ady and made use of him as a battering-ram against reaction, he remained isolated, even within the movement connected with *Nyugat*.[2]

The situation was roughly the same in 1848, under quite different circumstances of course, and Petofi too was an isolated figure at the time Ady saw the situation clearly. It would be a forced *post facto* assertion, without justification, to maintain that there was an important political left wing in Petofi's 1848. The kind of left wing represented by Marat ard Robespierre in France simply did not exist in the Hungary *of 1848*. And still less at the beginning of the twentieth century, in that period of transition, the period of *Nyugat*.

acted on him rather as releasing agents. In Ady's mature poetry Baudelaire's ascetic adoration of beauty, Verlaine's softly vibrating music, Apollinaire's playful surrealism, Mallarme's taut abstraction are all completely transformed. Ady was their contemporary, not follower. Professor C. M. Bowra in his excellent and convincing book, *The Creative Experiment*, mentions seven poets, Apollinaire Mayakovsky, Pasternak, Eliot, Lorca, Alberti and Kavafis as the major pioneers of the new poetry. We Hungarians think Ady is the eigth. Not only because he raised lyric poetry of national inspiration to universal heights, but also because he arched our age's poetic metaphysics of over dizzying ancient depths. Of the seven poets mentioned six used world languages, the Alexandrian Kavafis is so ascetic in his means of expression that he is relatively easy to interpret, But only one or two of Ady's poems have been successfully and adequately translated, and these are only valid and really understandable in terms of his whole poetry : his life work has rightly been called the creation of a poetic cosmos in which everything is related to everything else and the whole is more than the sum of its parts. And who would dare, or wish, or be able to undertake to translate the whole ?

rities. Petofi was not conscious of this in 1843; he had no realization of this problem as Ady and one other had—Bela Bartok—the only other person in Hungary to be aware of it. The fact that Bartok extended his work of collecting folk songs to Rumanian and Slovak territories amounts of the same awareness in the sphere of music as Ady's more general perception Bartok's music was a protest against the kind of Gypsy music the gentry favoured; it was anti-gentry, not anti Rumanian or anti-Slovak Magyarism. In this respect—although it seems that they did not meet personally or at least were not closely associated with each other—there are many common traits in Bartok and Ady. Hence, Dezso Szabo's plan was doomed to fail. What demonstrates the poet's real place, and I consider it an interesting piece of literary evdence, is the fact that Ervin Sinko's[8] revolutioary novel *Optimistak* (Optimists) contains a number of young characters who constantly refer to Ady. In the Sinko—Revai[9] revolutionary circle in which the scene of this novel is laid, Ady was a living influence in 1918-19 It was in all probability not the only group of this kind, though the only one that left evidence in the form of literature behind it

It is very important in considering the development of Ady's influence that, in my opinion, all revolutionary movements ceased again after 1919. In the period that followed 1919 even the most Leftist poets were inclined to compromise. For this reason I find Istvan Vas's[10] autobiography of great interest, for it reveals the petty-bourgeois, compromising nature of Kassak[11] even more clearly than Kassak's poetry itself At that time Ady was even more of an isolated figure with a single echo—devoid of the Ady kind of social problems—reasounding in the poetry of Attila Jozsef.[12] The poem Attila Jozsef wrote in memory of Ady calls up the memory of Ady the revolutionary: in a poem of Attila Jozsef, as in a great poem of Endre Ady's, stones crash against castle windows, and this expresses the only true continuity from Ady to be encountered in Hungarian poetry. I do not deny that there have been disciples of Ady among the revolutionary elements of the Communist Party; it is beyond dispute that Revai was one of Ady's most intelligent followers. After 1945, however, the revolutionary movement promptly became a manipulated movement An exellent - unfortunately unpublished—

It should be remembered that the famous atricle by Ignototus[3] against what he called "persecutional aesthetics" demanded no more thant that the contributors to *Nyugat* should receive acknowledgement and not only the official Hungarian literary establishment. It was never its purpose to oppose or undermine Hungarian officially sponsored literature. Ady, alone, had this purpose in mind at that time, and while, at best, there were writers who sympathized with and defended Jaszi[4] and his political party, and others, attracted by the labour movements, who turned to Austro-Marxism, Endre Ady was a unique phenomenon from a political point of view. Although he captivated many of his readers time and time again, he never had a broad mass following in Hungary at that period. I think that one must start from this point for a proper assessment of Ady's importance, for it explains the tension in Ady's poetry, without parallel in the literary work of any other writer of this age. The others were either of jewish origin and concurred—with slight leftist leanings—in the compromise of the Jewish bourgeoise, or came from gentry or half-gentry families and did not want to sever their links with their origin. In the case of Babits,[5] for instance, this was particularly clear.

Those who did not find the compromise acceptable did not take what might be described as a specifically Hungarian stand : Ervin Szabo,[6] for one, was really in the opposition and sought a remedy for the opportunism of the Hungarian workers' party in French syndicalism. Or let me take my own case : I tried to reconcile Ady's "faith in protest, mission in veto" with Hegelian dialectics. This sort of experiment naturally, could not be expected to have much effect, and consequently the peculiar situation arose whereby Ady, the great battering-ram and standard-bearer of *Nyugat* was, in point of fact, isolated within *Nyugat* itself. I think we have to fully aware of this paradox.

The history of Ady's influence is an interesting question that still has to be written. It starts with a thumping lie : the line that, starting with Dezso Szabo[7] after 1919, wanted to turn Ady after his death into a Hungarian nationalist. This, of course, is absolutely untrue, for it was just Ady who was the first Hungarian poet to see the connection between the fate of Hungary and the national mino-

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between things as they actually are and the way they should be. Petofi, Ady and Attila Jozsef stand for what should be, which is not some Utopian "ought to be" from nowhere, but expression of an effective subjective response to the objective needs of Hungarian development Large numbers, on the other hand, were anxious to evade the tasks of historic importance confronting Hungary and the chief concern of a good deal of Hungarian poetry in the final analysis is to lay ideological foundations and to idealize the evasion of these tasks Against them stands Ady, the great remonstrant.

Is Ady archaic in terms of style? Born and bred in a certain epoch, the idioms and the figures of speech of every poet are quite naturally typical of his age. This applies with equal force to Heine, Shelley, Petofi and Baudelaire, and of course to Ady as well. I *must* admit that I take a poor view of all those categories of style, and particularly of *Sezession*, *Art Nouveau*, and the like when they are mentioned in connection with Ady In the metaphots and the vocabulary of Ady obvious marks of the 1900-1918 epoch can be seen; the same, I think, is true of Babits and Kosztolanyi, though of course in another form. Any intelligent critic could discover that Ady and Babits were contemporaries

In analysing lyrical poetry particularly it is fair to say that there is no lyric poet whose poems all reach an equally high standard. It is usually said that Keats is an exception, but I for one cannot acknowledge that even all of Keats poems are on a level with the great odes With the progress of time all that is written on impulse and for the ephemeral moment increasingly fades and in poetry only the great symbols survive in which the poet has succeeded in epitomizing the aspirations of his age. From the many hundred poems Ady has written there are—let us exaggerate—perhaps two hundred poems in which these find expression, and these two hundred verses are the intrinsic treasure through which Ady survives. Neither Ady, Petofi nor any other poet ever became immortal through his collected poetical works It is sheer rubbish to say Ady is obsolete: he is not out of date at all, but it is true, on the other hand, that he wrote verses in, say, a January issue of *Nyugat* that were already dead in February. This is no disparagement of Ady; it is true of all poets.

study by Frenc Donath[13] describes how all political parties, including that of Rakosi, agreed to extinguish the reuolutionary councils about to be formed east of the river Tisza, for the aim of these councils was to become a second power against the Debrecen National Assembly. Revolutionary fervour, full of the illusions so characteristic of Benjamin's[14] poetry in the forties and fifties, soon changed into disenchantment; the theme of disillusion dominates the mentality of the young today, and this is why Ady's elevated style sounds so strange to them. This elevation of Ady's is genuine and concrete, and consequently stands in fierce contrast to bureaucratic pomposity; it is however, also diametrically opposed to what might be called the political cynicism with which the young have followed events for a long time.

This is a peculiar, although possibly not unique, situation. It would be worth investigating whether there are, *mutatis mutandis*, characteristics in the relation between the German people and Heine. He too has been a central figure in German poetry for close on a hundred years, and yet there is scarcely anyone who could be regarded as a true Heine enthusiast. Everybody, even a Karl Kraus[15], holds aloof from Heine. I do not, of course, in the slighest degree intend to draw a parallel between Heine and Ady. That would be quite impossible, if only for the difference between 1848 and 1900 and the different development of Hungary and Germany, regardless of any others. But none the less I believe that Ady is not a case without precedent, and I wonder—although I have not gone thoroughly into the history of literary influences—whether it would be possible to find a similar phenomenon in English literature with Shelley? I find it highly characteristic that the Eliot circle fiercely reject Shelley, and if I may be permitted to draw an analogy, I should say that the Eliot kind of nonsense over Shelley is very similar to the Kosztolanyi[16] rubbish over Ady. Of course, these are bold parallels without specific evidence, but I think that in the whole process of European development after the French Revolution there are common elements which point in that direction, and that in Hungary they show themselves even more specifically.

There is a difference in the Hungarian process of development

literature, two things must be decisively distinguished. In the first place, what achieves the level of world literature, and what only achieves a national level? This is an objective judgement. In the second place, the actual fact of what is in truth part of world literature has to be established. This does not depend exclusively upon its value. (The term value is not used here in an aesthetic sense only but in the context of the entire personality and the whole work.) A somewhat distant illustration is provided by Heine who really was part of world literature, and moreover, at a certain time exerted a considerable influence on French literature. Now, Heine had a German contemporary, Gottfried Keller, and I would not dare to say that he was of any less significance than Heine. Yet Gottfried Keller never achieved a place in world literature. He never had any influence outside German literature. That is to say that whether a writer becomes part of world literature depends on various literary, social, linguistic and other circumstances, and it must be admitted that no Hungarian writer so far has really done it Petofi has not, and in Ady's case certain specific additional difficulties arise, for since many of his greatest poems take a profound knowledge of Hungarian development and history for granted, the text would demand a number of annotations if the foreign reader is to understand it and th's, particularly in lyric poetry, is an almost unsurmountable barrier Our particular age, moreover, must also be taken into account. A dislike of elevated style and any compromise with manipulations is a characteristic of modern lyric poets. As a result—with the possible exception of a certain group of French and South American lyric poets--the content of Ady's verse would sound very unfamiliar to contemporary poets.

Nor should we entertain too great illusions over Attila Jozsef. It is true that Attila Jozsef is more easily translated, and there are therefore better Attila Jozsef translations, but it is out of the question that Attila Jozsef will be accepted as part of world literature in the sense that Mayakovsky and Eluard have been accepted. I think that this kind of bad luck has to be accepted by a small nation like Hungary Everything must be done to produce adequate Ady translations in foreign languages but—if I may say so—without cherishing great hopes. A lyric poet who in fact achieves a place in

I believe—and this is again quite another matter—that in Hungary, after the country has truly passed beyond the Stalin era and begun to build a living socialism which relies on a new proletarian democracy, there will be many more people who will become aware that Ady is the poet they like best. Since I read *Uj versek* (New Verses) in 1906—that is more than sixty years ago—I have not lost touch with Ady for a single day. This, however, is a piece of biographical information; and without wanting to exaggerate my own importance, I really cannot consider myself a typical phenomenon in the Hungarian development.

Then why is it so difficult to break a way for Ady into world literature? In the first place it is far eaasier to introduce narrative and dramatic works into world literature though translations. There are many million people all over the world whose favourite reading is *War and peace*, the *Iliad* or Swift, of whom only five or ten per cent at most have read these masterpieces in the original language. I read *War and peace* in the Genman Reclam Edition when I was a schoolboy in the seventh form of the secondary school (during lessons on the sly) and the badness of the translation is still fresh in my memory Even a bad translation, however, cannot shatter the epic grandeur of *War and Peace*; it comes through everything. And this is true for Shakespeare and the Greek tragedies as well. Lyric poetry, however, can hardly ever be reproduced, that is one of its characteristics. In my youth, when I was closely in touch with all things German, I read French poetry in German translated by lyric poets of the calibre of Stefan George, and I have to admit that if I had not read Baudelaire in the original, the Stefan George kind of Baudelaire would never have impressed me at all. I mention Stefan George on purpose, for on one can say he used literal translations or that he could not write verse—and yet just that got lost in his translations which is so humanly, so deeply moving in Baudelaire's poetry There are certain things whose emotional accents in French or German are radically different. And this all holds good to an even greater degree in the case of Hungarian, the language of a small people, and its remote literature. I think we would be deceiving ourselves if we were to believe that Petofi has in fact found a place in world literature. And indeed, speaking of world

NOTES

1 Sandor Petofi (1823-1849). Hungary's great revolutionary poet

2 Nyugat (West), literary periodical published from 1908 to 1941. All significant poets, writers, philosophers and artists of that age were contributors to Nyugat.

3 Ignotus (1869-1949). Journalist and poet, one of the founders and editors in-chief of Nyugat, an enthusiastic supporter of Ady Lived abroad from 1919 to 1948.

4 Oszkar Jaszi (1875-1957). Historian and journalist, leading left-wing politician Head of the Radical Party Left Hungary during the Republic of councils. After 1926 he lived in the USA, where he was a professor of sociology at Oberlin College.

5 Mihally Babits (1888-1941). He and Ady were the Hungarian poets of that age.

6 Ervin Szabo (1877-1918). Historian, librarian, left-wing social democrat leader, Marxist sociological writer.

7 Dezso Szabo (1879-1945). Novelist and pamphleteer, had a considerable literary influence between the two world wars His ideas were nationalist and racial.

Ervin Sinko (1898-1967). Hungarian novelist who lived in Yugoslavia, and was a university professor in Novi Sad. In the inter-war years he emigrated to Paris, where he moved in the circle of Romain Rolland, Barbusse and Mihaly Karolyi His more important novels deal with the Hungarian revolution in 1919, and the Moscow trials in the Stalin era

Jozsef Revai (1898-1959). Politician, journalist, historian and essayist. Foundation member of the Hungarian Communist Party. Lived in Moscow from 1934 until the liberation of the country. From 1949 to 1953

world literature in this way is a rare bird indeed. Take Pasternak. I cannot form an opinion, but my Russian friends assure me that Pasternak must be regarded an important lyric poet. Yet not even the fact that his very bad epigonistic novel became a world literary sensation was able to boost the circulation of Pasternak's poems.

I would like to mention in passion in passing that there is a third sort of world literature to which I, for one, attach little significance, namely, the literature classified as world literature by literary experts. A simple example will put the reader straight : English literary critics regard twenty-five contemporaries of Shakespeare as belonging to world literature, though the utmost that Webster or Ford or the others have effected is that one has got to know their names; they have not had the slightest influence on the development of contemporary drama or on ideas of tragedy. World literature as seen by experts is very narrow and artificially invented by professors and acadmicians In Hungary likewise we all learned about the great triumvirate of Petofi, Arany[17] and Tompa.[18] but this never succeeded in *imprinting Tompa on the general* literary consciousness. of Hungarians. No matter what was said of Petofi and Arany, and some were pro Petofi others were anti, anything might be possible, but in the whole of my life I never met a single person who cared about the poetry of Tompa in any form for even five minutes. So I am quite uninterested in what literary experts consider fame.

The great crisis that drew Europe into the First World War was echoed more or less consciously—through a variety of underground channels—in the entire literature of almost the whole world It is my personal opinion that Ady was the first to react, and to react most effectively, and that Ady is supreme among all those who voiced recalcitrance and the necessity of revolution—hence, Ady is the greatest lyric poet of this age, both humanly and poetically. I have no fear of being branded a chauvinist for expressing this *opinion.*



Endre Ady, 1909

Minister of Education, he put into practice the Stalin-Zhdanov policy in literature and art. Author of several studies on Ady.

10 Istvan Vas (b. 1910). Poet, translator, on the editorial board of *The New Hungarian Quarterly* and a frequent contributor. His poems appeared in Nos' 23 and 29, and an essay on Apollinaire in No. 34.

11 Lajos Kassak (1887-1967). Poet novelist, painter, left-wing socialist. Between the two world wars was a pioneer of Hungarian avant-garde art and letters. See his poems in Nos. 23 and 28, and parts of his autobiography in Nos. 19 and 31.

12 Attila Jozsef (1905-1937). Great Hungarian poet in the period between the two world wars See his poems in No 31 in Edwin Morgan: "Modern Hungarian Poetry."

13 Ferenc Donath (b 1914). Sociologist, former Deputy Minister of Agriculture

14 Loszlo Benjamin (b 1915). Poet See a poem in No 23.

15 Karl Kraus (1874-1936) Austrian social and literary critic.

16 Dezso Kosztolanyi (1885-1936) Poet, novelist, writer of short stories, essayist, translator, one of the most significant Hungarian writers in the first half of this century.

17 Janos Arany (1817-1882) He and Petofi were the greatest Hungarian poets of the nineteenth century.

18 Mihaly Tompa (1817-1868) Romantic poet of lesser significance, representative of what was known as the "folk-national" trend of writing



Endre Ady and "Leda" (Adél Brull), Summer of 1907



Endre Ady and "Csinszka," (Berta Boncza), His Wife, 1915



Endre Ady and His Mother, 1917

DESIRE TO BE LOVED

None comes before me and none after,
No kin, no friend for grief and laughter,
To none belong I—none.
To none belong I—none.

I am as all men—polar whiteness
Secret, alien, gleaming brightness
A far will o' the wisp.
A far will o' the wisp.

I cannot stay without friends, brothers,
I fain would show myself to others
That seeing they might see
That seeing they might see.

For this all—self-torment, song, giving,
That others' I might be, then living,
They loving, I would love.
They loving, I would love

A LEGEND OF SAINT MARGARET

Saint Margaret's Isle has whisper'd me a tale
One lonely night whose secret haunts me yet:
An ancient king had promis'd to the veil

Sad, between heaven and earth to wander,
Driven by wind of fate their lot,
Towards beauties sinister and icy
Gallops Elijah's chariot.

Burning their hearts, brains are ice-cold,
Earth looks up, mocks the course they run.
Upon their cold way, diamantine
Dust scatters, pitying, the sun

THE OLD BOY'S GREETINGS

To Zilah let there go this song of greeting :
  Half sad, half glad, tender :
His scholar sends it his old master, weeping,
  His scholar old and vagabond, the sender.

The old school since is younger grown, renewing
  Youth and youthful vigour.
Us only time has kissed, and kissed us aged,
  Time, distance, wine and song and conflict's rigour.

Paris shrieks at me while I weave these verses
  'See your scholar, master !'
Ah ! my old teacher, my good Greek professor !
  The curse of Greece brings still today disaster.

Homer, the cloudy tragedies of Hellas
  Stab my heart. You, reading
The Grecian lines, we God !—ye gods, I hear you,
  We listen, idle, boyish and unheeding.

His snow white daughter, maiden Margaret.
Out of a dreaming sleep she woke to cry
And swoon away because of sudden din...
Into the royal court-yard, wild of eye,
A savage horde of men came spurring in.
—Away to westward someone waits, no boor
Of churlish manners like the palatine,
But just a youth, a singer soft and fine,
A gentle, wistful, wandering troubadour.
Long, long she waits, and falters, numb in heart.
Within the clamerous castle horsemen rear
And Magyars come, but not—to take her part—
One lov'd dream-cavalier.
He did not come, he did not come at all,
That gentle kiss, that plaintive serenade
Return'd no more, where Danube's waters fall :
And Christ's grim cloister claim'd the weeping maid
Whose dust still sleeps in its lonely wall.

THE CHARIOT OF ELIJAH

The Lord, Elijah-like, to heaven
Takes all, whom, smitten with his rod,
He loves, and gives them quick hearts, glowing,
The burning chariots of God.

Skyward Elijah's sons up-rushing
Where winter reigns eternal, stay,
And on the ice-peaked Himalayas
Their roaring wheels fling snow-dust spray.

For thus the god of destiny disposes.

It matters little, green the hills of Zilah,
Gay, the wine-press flowing,
A drop of joy, a short forgetfulness
Gives him whom fate strikes, smites; no mercy showing.

Yet now how many on your head enwreathed,
Speak their benediction ?
For man to find a key to life's enigma,
Still high the quest, though followed in affliction.

Yet am I here to push your festal chariot
To glad homage leaping,
And I would fain your hands kiss, my good master
With blessing and with cursing, and with weeping,

THE HORSES OF DEATH

On the white road of the moonlight
The winds, wild shepherds of the sky,
Drive on their flocks of scudding cloud
And towards us, towards us, without sound,
Unshod, Death's horses onward fly.

Silent, death-bringing steeds of death—
And shadowy horsemen on them ride,
Sad riders, dumb in grief obscure—
Yea—the moon fears and hides her face
If the white road along they glide.

The whole world slumbers, soundless, still,
Whence come they ? Who knows ? Who can guess ?

But Homer's blue, clear sky is overclouded :
Gods, heroes high-hearted
In swift succession, since with life I battle,
Go from my heart, forgotten and departed.

Aner and genitive of aner, andros—
Right, the declination ?
But I have long forgotten Greek, wise master
I wait, a man, my fate, life's consummation.

Today, yet on my face I feel you looking,
Eyes so calm and healing,
You gave so much of courage : ah ! life passes
Never to me held joy of life revealing.

You would we held life fair, so of life's beauty
Would be ever telling—
Upon your lips there played a smile of sadness,
But those lips spoke of strength and faith indwelling.

You too confirmed me—in your little journal
Gave my songs a hearing,
The years have passed, and I the rhyming scholar
Grow older, like my master, old age nearing.

You stand before me, when I near surrender—
Life's hostage, self-giving
Willing, unwilling, on your head, wise, stately,
The gods shall set a crown of laurel living.

So comes the festal day, but you stand leafless—
Once a rose-spray bearing :
Fate broke it off, fate, fate, Greek fate, malignant,
True then the myth, the ancient myth unsparing ?

Like you I leafless stand : but for me blossom
No remembered roses :
We live for others : we are givers always,

THE ANCIENT EVIL ONE

Forth from the East, in cloak of purple
When song of old dawned as a sun,
He came wine-thirsty, proudly riding,
With music came he, and with song,
Hailed me, the Ancient Evil One.

Close to me ear, wild rake he sings me,
'Drink, drink !—I make him no reply.
Red dawn, red dawn in long succession
Follows, and on the window knocks
With drunken fingers gliding by.

The lost bliss of the East, the holy,
This present's shame and dark disgrace
And the mist-future, vapour-patterned,
Dance on a winy table where
The Evil meets me face to face.

My coat is worn, my head nods weary,
Upon his shoulders purple glows.
Crucifix, two candles—brooding dark
A sad, great tourney, without end,
The wine upon the table flows.

He fights with me through the long ages
Since Babylon, whose streets once trod
My ancestor, it may be, lustful,
And since, he comes to me, my comrade,
My father, and my king—my god.

A scornful-eyed Apollo, wanton,
He slips his cloak—the long hours pass—
Still the dance whirls—the conflict rages—
Still stands his horse—Around, around
The blood-stained table goes the glass.

They loossn stirrup, stay their course,
Ever one horse a horseman lacks.
Ever one saddle riderless.

He before whom those horsemen rein
Into that saddle mounts, his breath
Catching, grown pale, and with him fast
Along the white road of the moon
Seeking new riders, gallops Death.

AUTUMN IN PARIS

Yesterday Autumn into Paris crept.
Boulevard Saint Michel glided soundless through,
In the fierce Dog-Days, under still leafage
And came upon me there

I wandered slowly towards the river,
My heart burned with songs, little faggots that flamed,
Purple spirals of song smoke—laughing—sad,
Song that sang of my dying.

And Autumn reached me and whispered to me,
Boulevard Saint Michel shuddered suddenly.
Swirling, rustling, down the long Boulevard,
Flew the leaves playing.

One moment—Summer had not shrunk alarmed,
And Autumn Paris left and sped laughing,
But Autumn had been there and I alone
Know it beneath the sighing leaves.

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Still the dance whirls—the conflict rages—
Still stands his horse—Around, around
The blood-stained table goes the glass.

Great lord, brave comrade, grant me pardon,
My head is heavy, and above
Broods grief—Much, much there was of goodness,
Of sin, of fierce nights—of desire,
My father, there was much of love.

Groaning, my broken lyre I offer,
My broken heart, he laughs, loud-long.
Beneath the sacred tavern windows
Life passes rushing, roaring by
Life, full of wine and blood and song.

My lord, with others join the battle,
For me joy is no joy—and fame
And wine fumes bow my head with aching
In bitter dreams the claws are worn,
The lion's pride and strength grown tame.

The soil of Hungary my soil is,
Barren, exhausted—Vanity
Thy frenzy's high great words—What profits
The feast of blood and wine ? What man ?
Be he a son of Hungary.

My lord, I am a poor worn servant
A roving fool who wastes his breath,
Why must I drink till I fall senseless ?
I have no money—lost my faith,
My force spent—I am near to death.

I have a mother, loved and holy,
Leda I have—may her God bless—
And a few dreams that glow as lightning,
A few friends, and, beneath my soul
A great marsh—a vile rottenness.

A few songs, it may be, I have too,
Songs new and great, wild songs of lust,

But in this struggle, old, unceasing,
In drunken fever I would fall
Beneath the table in the dust.

O Lord, dismiss thy worn, sad servant,
Nothing is left—what lies before
Is certain, ancient, certain ruin;
Cast no spells, give me no more wine—
Leave me my lord, I drink no more.

I have a sickness, deadly, loathing,
A withered, ailing body—See
For the last time I bow before thee—
Down to the ground I dash the glass,
My lord, I yield myself to thee.

And now he goes to mount his charger,
Claps on my shoulder—mightily
Laughs, and rides on with pagan singing—
With lusty dawns, along the wild
Witch-conjured winds, that sweep the sky.

Forth from the East towards new conflicts
Pagan, he fares towards the West
A numb joy fills my cold frame—With me
The crucifix—the broken glass—
Beneath the table stretched I rest.

KINSMAN OF DEATH

I am akin to death, his kinsman,
Fleeting to the love I love, swift burning;
Her lips to kiss I love who goes
Not returning.

Great lord, brave comrade, grant me pardon,
My head is heavy, and above
Broods grief—Much, much there was of goodness,
Of sin, of fierce nights—of desire,
My father, there was much of love.

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Leda I have—may her God bless—
And a few dreams that glow as lightning,
A few friends, and, beneath my soul
A great marsh—a vile rottenness.

A few songs, it may be, I have too,
Songs new and great, wild songs of lust,

Of the forest that was, of the reeds that waved
The fettered spirits start at their beat.

Where the trees of the silent past
Brooded still in the chequered shade
On a sudden the shapes of a winter's tale
Leap to life in the listening glade

Here dense and solemn the forest stands,
Here the song of the years of old,
Since the days of our forefathers, fighters sad,
Lives in the deaf mist's silent hold

Spectral autumn is with us now,
Men are few, and their numbers wané,
In his cloak of eddying mist-wrack treads
Grey November the hill-girt plain.

Suddenly, strangely the plain anew
Clothes with rushes and woodlands green
Its limbs of November, its limbs of fog
And hides in the mist of the years that have been,

Only bloodshed and mystery,
Footprints ancestral in ancient ways,
Only the forest, only the reeds,
Only the madmen of vanished days.

Lost and ancient the traveller rides,
Through new grown brushwood upon his way,
No light shines forth, and no lamp burns,
Unseen the villages of today.

Villages unseen, shuddering,
Dream of the past and dumbly sleep.
From the mist and the forest, the ancient, the dark,
The wolf, the bear and the great elk leap.

Roses I love, the sick, the languid,
Women whose passion fears the morrow,
Years of the past, radiant years,
Years of sorrow.

And the sad hours I love, that summon,
Sound with their beat a ghostly message,
Of mighty death, of holy death
Shadowed presage.

And they I love who go far journeys
And they who weep, and they who waken,
Meadows at dawn where sweeps the rain
Cold, forsaken.

Peace I love, I love weeping tearless,
And the tired renunciation,
Bringing the wise, the sick, the poet,
Consolation.

Him I love, the deceived, who suffers,
The crippled, him who halts, unmoving,
Him who believes not, mourns, I love,
The world loving.

I am akin to death, his kinsman,
Fleeting to love I love, swift burning,
Her lips to kiss I love who goes
Not returning.

THE LOST RIDER

Lost and ancient, the horseman rides,
Blind the trot of the horse's feet,

Over the spirit terror leaned and smiled
With evil joy. The secret destiny
Of every ancestor into all men
Entered, and drunkenly thought lurched
To a dark feast of fear and blood.
Thought, the proud minister of man,
Thought that walked not with limping feet.
Strange, strange that night of summer.
Then I thought, then in truth I thought
Some god neglected caught at life
And bore it death-wards, and behold
Here I yet live since, such a one
As that night made me, and upon
The citadel of God remember
That dreadful night that sunk a world
Strange, strange that night of summer.

Translations by J. C. W. Horne

Lost and ancient, the horseman rides,
Blind the trot of the horse's feet,
Of the forest that was, of the reeds that waved
The fettered spirits start at their beat.

REMEMBRANCE OF A SUMMER NIGHT

From heaven a furious angel beat
A tocsin on the sad dark earth.
At least a hundred young men perished.
Of stars at least a hundred fell,
Of purity the fillet cherished
At least a hundred maidens lost.
Strange, strange that night of summer.
Our old bee-hive took fire and burned,
Our finest foal, too, broke its leg,
I dreamed the dead lived once again,
And Burkus, our good dog, was killed,
And Mari, the sewing-maid, the dumb
Suddenly sang hoarse rasping songs—
Strange, strange that night of summer.
Beggars on horseback clattered *boldly*,
While true men cowered cravenly,
Grown arrogant, *the robber plundered*,
Strange, strange that night of summer.
We knew that man is prone to fall
And deeply held in debt to love;
It was in vain, and strange in truth,
The world was changed from what it was.
Never more mocking shone the moon,
Never more little yet was man
As on that night.
Strange, strange that night of summer.

A GRACEFUL MESSAGE OF DISMISSAL

Let the spell break a hundred-and-first time
that has broken a hundred : I dismiss you yet again
for ever, if you believed I still held you dear,
and believed one more dismissal stood in line.
A hundred-times-wounded, here, I throw at you
the sumptuous king's-robe of my forgetting you.
Wear it, for the weather will come colder,
wear it, for I am sorry for us both,
for the huge shame of such unequal fight,
for your humiliation, for I don't know what,
and for you I am sorry, for you alone here.

How long, how silently it has been like this :
how often, to reasure you in your fate
by dazzling favours, you were given a golden
Leda-psalm, sent white-hot to the fairest
of the fair. I received nothing, withdrew nothing :
it was my grace to give you false belief
in kisses "wont to wanton otherwhere"
and loves I was "wont to love otherly" :
and I am grateful for all these embraces,
and despite everything I thank such wisps
of Leda-gone as any man can thank
on leaving behind him an old listless kiss.

And for how long I have not sought you out
in gritty past, in muddy present, how long
since I took leave of you, on that slave-track
where your sex steps into its circumscribed fate.
For how long now I have looked for nothing
but what you might keep of my splendid self,
of the magical attributes my verse drew youwards,
so that you can find consolation, lonely, loving,
in having existed too, as well as the man
who left a world *unclaimed at last* to hang

A STROLL IN THE COUNTRY

Silence all round, and I stroll in silence
across this small old Guignol-country
rinsed out by grubby autumn floods
and weeping eaves of each thatched cottage.
And perched on the crest of this great quiet,
strutting and swaggering, the peacock's envy,
a vulgar, all-usurping, gun-clutching
blackguardly rout of hunting gentry.

Here and there the gloomy thrust
of factory chimneys and urban towers :
how many crippled, begging, slaving
in Sin, live silent there in tears.
And heroes from old savage wakes
dress up to gnaw man's-heart today,
and serfs that once rebelled are nowhere,
they live serfs still if not swept away.

They are living still, but their soul is Silence,
there is silence, yes, but never such silence :
from half-a-country's choking breasts
revenges rattle, black and scarlet.
Town greets village with silence-sign,
a terrible word lurks dumb in these emblems :
soundless pit-shafts with damped-down curses
hoard their hellish unheard-of engines.

Silence will redeem everything here,
explosions dream in its deaf lap,
and this little thousandfold-strangled
land will explode. Let the usurpers clap
the grateful levy of this cold and silent
soil to their hearts, winter-secure :
at a flash, like an avalanche, unasked
the fury of buried guns will roar.

 (1912)

LAZARUS AT THE PALACE GATE

I

Midnight. Someone is feasting
From the luxurious palace whispering wafts
with the wind.
Someone is counting coin.
O music of music.
I have never heard such a sound.

Listen : papers of silk
Are singing a psalm, subdued and proud
The infant metals tinkle,
Heavily gold rings out.
Tears rolls down my face.

And I'm propping up the palace, idle.
Music surges, freezes, roars on.
A festive chorale indeed !
As though the whole world's joy
Were in that singing.

Whose money is it ?
Tears roll down my face.
May his hands wither,
The corrupt, the happy
Hands of that wretch

II

In a house that's tall, ornate,
To flush and celebrate
The rich have met together,
The rich are singing together
In a house that's tall, ornate.

BURIAL ON THE SEASHORE

On Brittany's beaches the dream comes too.
The pair of us are sleeping, white and dead
In the drab halflight of a wintry shore.

Then sturdy lads of Brittany will come,
And earnest girls draped in their long head-shawls.
A sorrowful, religious chant begins.

Singsong and mist. Roar of a heavy sea.
Into a small red boat they carry us.
And carry flowers, and fear for us, and weep.

The fury of an icy gale erupts.
Its red sails flapping, the small boat drives off.
The pair of us are running, white and dead.

(1906) *M. H*

A POET OF THE FUTURE

When in Hungarian gardens human kind,
The rose, is gone, for ever passed away,
One pure, sad youth alone will stay behind,
Needing no grief beyond that destiny
Youth of the future, how I envy you !
For by that time, when your late song you sing,
Gone will our great Hungarian curse be too
And no one, no one will be listening.

(1907) *M. H.*

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The rich have met together,
The rich are singing together
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Listen : down in the street,
At the corner, fierce, not sweet,
A psalm rings out. Lazarus sings.
Looks up to the windows and sings
From his corner, down in the street.

Now the alleys are dark and bare
Who brought such music there ?
The rich turn pale,
The rich fall silent,
Now the alleys are dark and bare.

And silent Lazarus stands.
Then, a clapping of hands.
With their hands the rich applaud.
With loud laughter the rich applaud.
And silent Lazarus stands.

III

In autumn and full of sadness
Old biblical Lazarus comes.
Uneasy the rich acknowledge him.
And Lazarus breathes, walks on, keeps silent
And together with him, unseen,
Come old great powers, limping

Often inside his chest there's a rattling .
There's a great guffaw inside him, explosive,
But his mouth begins to twist for weeping.

For ever Lazarus is the autumnally lame,
But here no earth they are still rejoicing.
There are times when he too would like to rejoice.

And there are times when he's tempted to dance

In the reddish woods with satyrs as reddish,
And feels like dancing to lumber bagpipes

He will even stand among the lined-up dancers,
Waiting for *women* despite the state of his lungs,
And waiting for something that would make him laugh.

Grape juice and old wine they bring
For him to drink, the startled herd of the rich,
And he sips the sweet juice, to try it.

He tries it, and his body begins to tingle
Now at a girl, now at a woman,
And that remains his only adventure.

Asthmatic, choking, out of his chest
Rises the cough of autumn, so much
Like the groaning and moaning of lust.

And this frenzy of coughing appales
The faces and hearts around him.
Autumn comes. As though it were death.

(*1907*) *M. H.*

GIVE ME THOSE EYES OF YOURS

Give me those eyes of yours,
Let me plant them in my fading forehead,
Let me see myself as splendid.

Give me those eyes of yours,
Your blue sight always building fitly,
Adding beauty, adding pity.

Give me those eyes of yours,
That can find me beautiful
And can yearn and burn and kill,

Give me those eyes of yours,
Loving you I love myself too,
And it's your eyes I envy you.

(1907) *E. M.*

"THE LORD CARRIES OFF LIKE ELIJAH"

The Lord carries off like Elijah all
Whom he afflicts with his great love :
Their fierily whirling hearts are
Chariots of fire sent from above.

The Elijah-people race to the sky
And stop at snow's eternal crust,
On the Himalayan icepeaks
Their chariots clank and puff up dust.

Sad exiles between sky and earth,
They are driven by the wind of fate;
Up to fiendish cool perfections
It rolls, Elijah's chariot.

Their hearts are glowing, their minds are frozen.
The earth laughs at them from below,
And then the sun takes pity, throws
Cold diamond-dust on their ice-road.

(1908) *E. M.*

IN THE BOAT OF MEDITATION

Meditation, sad-straked boat,
I slip you off from my death-port:
We go
And I let my blue flag float.

My old, fast craft still beckons me,
But I leave the all of life behind me,
We go
And may our wake efface memory.

This is marvellousness, the finest,
Our soul is being laid in state,
We go,
Our life and all ` godspeed at last.

Between life and death is our ocean;
Drawn by a divine far-off confusion
We go,
Set on the waters of meditation.

Meditation, sad-straked boat,
I slip you off from my death-port :
We go,
Till sun-death cuts tomorrow short

(1910) *E. M.*

IN TIME'S SIEVE

Holding a giant sieve,
Time stands, for ever sifting,
Picking out and sifting whole worlds,
Quite cheerfully, not bitter at all.
And nobody minds but those who are dropped.

Whoever falls through the mesh deserves it.
Time has no pity for chaff.
The miasmal desires of senile nations,
Worlds that have lost their fire, broken lives :
All these deserve death, their loss no matter.

Let me speak the new words of prophets :
Not those who disavow the past
But those who are no seed for the future
Will always fall through the sieve :
Worlds, nations, ideas grown effete.

They withered and fell away,
Proclaims the new prophet-song,
But the Lord and Time endure.
Listless nations decay
And, with them, the spotless Lots.

Oh for the senile, the unfulfilled,
And oh for me, sharing my kind's fate.
How truly we're falling through
The cruel giant sieve,
Disapproved by Time.

(1914) *M. H.*

BEFORE THE DISPERSAL

> *"And in his estate shall stand up a vile person ..but he shall come in peaceably and... he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up and shall become strong with a small people. He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province.. he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches : yea, and he shall forecast his devices against the strongholds, even for a time." Daniel 11.*

Our War God also scatters his people, then :
That is the way of the stricter gods,
As a dejected Transylvanian priest
Wrote long ago,
Looking for our blood kinship with the Jews.

With bad morals we came to a bad place,
Highwaymen once, then midwaymen,
And while our gentry preyed on their peers and
the poor
Hailstorms ruined our sloppy dreams,
And even our Temple remains unbuilt

Never we stood firm, never could hold our ground,
And that, from the beginning, has been our curse
Not even our lecherous blood is ours
Anything may come to take our place :
It's us our ravaging has ravaged.

Nor world-wide shall our kind be scattered,
Victorious even in forsakenness :
We were not steeled in the hot rage of ages,
But in the foundry of the world shall melt,
Lost to the world because we lost ourselves

(1914)

M. H.

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The cruel giant sieve,
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(1914) *M. H.*

Only the moon will jog along,
And the earth too, when man is gone,
And the world
Of moonlit tower- rubble will
Find peace again.

(1914) *E. M.*

THE COMPLAINT OF A DISCONTENTED YOUNG MAN

(at the beginning of our conscripted century)

Paris, Peking...London or Rome ?
How dreary is this city, the world !
City or village, it all means the same : nothing.
To move from one place to another
Is utterly senseless now.
If only something different,
A great affray would begin.

For who can still bear this greyness
In which liars brightly sparkle ?
O clenched fist, come:
Let this worthless life capsize
And Death, the great doctor, come,
And after death a great opening of eyes,
And horrors
Something different, come !
Revolutions, why do you wait ?

Blood, blood, blood.
Human beings will be more beautiful
Once they have cleansed themselves with blood,
And better too.

NIGHT TOWER

Silent village, summer's night.
Staring out, white and worried,
The tower
Imagines blood-news from the burning
Wrinkled world.

Keeps its bells unmoving, mute,
Sends no message to the god
It houses.
Stands, trembles, stares : a tower
That seems spellbound.

Marvellously the clouds in the sky
Swim, skim across the moon,
And the tower
Greets its moon, its celestial
Bus of wisdom.

But what is a tower to the moon
That's never anxious never late,
Not startled
When this little earth-star takes
Knocks from fate.

Maybe tomorrow our godly guard
Will be plastered bright, and the blood will fly,
Our tower,
And our martial past will show its verb :
Conquer or die.

Maybe tomorrow the tower will avow
Its old heroic falcon-times,
And its sons,
The bells, stop dreaming and begin
Their linking chimes.